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ABSTRACT

A format is presented for use of student teachers in structuring their classroom observation techniques. Fifteen classroom and school activities are listed with a comprehensive questionnaire accompanying each. These questionnaires guide the student on what behaviors to observe and suggest objective and subjective responses to these behaviors to be considered on the part of the student. The basic purpose of the format is to evoke from the student a consideration of what was actually learned during the observation that will improve personal teaching techniques and abilities. (JD)

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ST. MARY'S COLLEGE OF MARYLAND
St. Mary's City, Maryland 20686

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AACTE Recognition Roll for Sound Practices Entry

Secondary Teacher Education Program

Structured Observation Component

Although most teacher education programs provide for pre-instructional observation, St. Mary's believes that without specific assignments the result is a collection of isolated bits of information and the lack of any common base on which to develop programmatic learnings.

Consequently, we have introduced a two-week structured observation component consisting of fifteen activities, all of which follow the same basic format. For instance, students might be asked to observe and analyze the lesson objective, the learning environment, or a faculty meeting. In each case, students are given a detailed questionnaire on that topic. These questionnaires provide the necessary structure to make the observational experience educationally worthwhile and efficient, even though specific responses are not expected.

However, the heart of this component is the process questions to which students must react for each of the assignments. These are four in number: (1) What was something I learned that I want to employ in my own teaching?; (2) What was something that surprised me about the topic under investigation?; (3) What was something I discovered about which I want to think further?; and (4) What was something I discovered about which I need to know more?

The responses to the process questions are collected and analyzed by the teacher education faculty. These responses then form the basis for lectures and discussions on both cognitive and affective aspects of the teaching/learning experience. In this way, not only do students practice systematic observation, but the results of it provide feedback for planning more effective college classroom work.

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Michael L. Berger
Phyllis A. Keen

SP012 434

St. Mary's College of Maryland

ST. MARY'S CITY, MARYLAND 20686

November 21, 1977

Ms. Kay Shoemaker
Director of Membership Relations
AACTE
Suite 610
One Dupont Circle
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Ms. Shoemaker:

As St. Mary's Chief Institutional Representative, it is my pleasure to forward to you our entry for the Recognition Roll for Sound Practices. In addition to the basic description of our Structured Observation Component, I also have enclosed several forms that we use to implement this practice.

We wish to take this opportunity to commend the AACTE for instituting this additional awards program, and to thank you for considering our entry.

Cordially,

Michael L. Berger,
Director of Teacher Education

MLB:kp

cc: Dr. Underwood
Dr. Keen

Enclosures

Instructions for Structured Observation

Questionnaire Assignments

Each of the questionnaires that you are being asked to use during your period of structured observation in the schools is meant to be only a guide for your investigation of that topic. The questions included therein are by no means all inclusive and you may want to add additional ones as you become better acquainted with the topic. Furthermore, it is possible that you may not feel the need to answer all of the questions given. In short, the questionnaires are merely a technique to create a certain mind set, with your own abilities and interests determining the final product.

To help you further crystalize your ideas regarding these questionnaires, we are asking that you react to <u>each</u> by answering the following process questions:

1. What was something I learned that I want to employ in my own teaching?

2. What was something that surprised me about the topic under investigation?

3. What was something I discovered about which I want to think further?

4. What was something I discovered about which I need to know more?

Each of these questions is repeated for your convenience on the attached forms. Please use a new form for each assignment, and indicate the topic under investigation in the space provided.

Secondary Teacher Education Program
St. Mary's College of Maryland
St. Mary's City, Maryland 20686

Process Questions for Structured
Observation Assignments

Topic:_____

Date of Observation:_____Place:_____

1. What was something I learned that I want to employ in my own teaching?

2. What was something that surprised me about the topic under investigation?

3. What was something I discovered about which I want to think further?

4. What was something I discovered about which I need to know more?

_____
YOUR NAME

_____
ASSIGNMENT DUE DATE

(PLEASE USE REVERSE SIDE IF NECESSARY)

Observing and Analyzing the Lesson Objective

What

1. How soon after the start of the class period did the objective for the lesson become clear to you? By what means did it become clear?

2. How soon did the objective become clear to the students? How did you know it was clear to them? For instance, what behavioral changes did you notice? Was there a marked change in their involvement? A lessening in bewilderment?

3. What means was used to make the objective clear? For example, was the class told the objective explicitly?

   a. by the teacher saying, "Yesterday, we did X, so today we shall . . ."?
   b. by a topic for the day or an outline of some sort on the board that told or suggested "what we are doing and why"?
   c. by the teacher's distinguishing frankly between "what we are trying to do and what we are not trying to do"--a distinction often necessary if the class is slow, or if the natural associations of the materials at hand tend to draw in irrelevancies?

So What

1. Was the overall objective being purposely withheld? Was the class given only a sequence of "hints" (mediate objectives) for each step in their work? Why? Was the work new? Difficult? Would you have judged the class psychologically ready to know the objective from the outset? On what are you basing your judgment?

2. To what extent did the previous assignment reveal what the objective for the day would be?

3. Did the objective remain clear throughout the lesson? For example, did every question that the teacher asked lead definitely toward accomplishing the objective? Did every response that the teacher rewarded contribute in some recognizable and defensible way toward achieving the goal?

4. Could you have stated at any particular moment exactly where the class was in relation to achieving the objective?

5. Did the class know at all times what it was trying to achieve? Or had some "lost track"?

   a. How did you know they had "lost track": By inattention? Random answers? Guessing? Anxieties?
   b. Why had they "lost track"? (1) Did the teacher fail to interrelate the questions? (2) Were syntheses too infrequent? (3) Were tangential responses or questions or remarks "honored"? (4) Did the teacher change the level of questioning without preparing the class; that is, without requiring the students responding at the more sophisticated level to tell the class how they arrived at their answers?

(OVER)

Observing and Analyzing the Techniques of Motivation

A. Lesson Context

What

1. How was the learning situation "set up"? How, for example, was the lesson initiated?

So What

1. How was it explicitly related to the previous lesson, or lessons, or to some other larger whole? In other words, how did the teacher show that he was aware of the kinds of things students would have to know before they could do whatever the lesson would require?

B. Motivation Itself

What

1. What techniques were used to arouse students' interest in the subject matter?

So What

1. Were these techniques really appropriate to the objective as the teacher seemed to interpret it? As you would interpret it?

2. Were these techniques valid in terms of the subject matter?

   a. Or did they distort it; for example, present history as fiction or literature as psychology?
   b. Were the connections that were suggested between the subject matter and the students' "world" devised?
   c. Were the connections really extrinsic to the subject matter?
   d. Did they disguise unrecognizably what the real connections are? On what are you basing your judgment?

3. Were the techniques used appropriate to the particular class?

   a. Or did the teacher underestimate the level of maturity?
   b. Or was the teacher using some "ready-made" motivation unsuited to this group?

Now What

1. If you were to bring this class to this portion of subject matter, what intrinsic motivations would you use?

Observing and Analyzing Questioning During a Lesson

A. Copy exactly five sequential questions asked by the teacher:
   a.
   b.
   c.
   d.
   e.

1. Are these questions clear or ambiguous? Explain.

2. Are they largely thought questions or fact questions? How might the development of the lesson explain this?

3. Do these questions deal with the most important parts of the lesson? If so, how? If not, why not?

B. Describe in detail the teacher's manner of asking questions and handling answers:

1. Does the teacher repeat the answers given by the pupils? Why or why not?

2. Is there a developmental relationship among these questions? If so, what? If not, why do you suppose this is the case?

3. Are any questions discussed that originate with the students? If so, how? If not, why not?

Observing and Analyzing Teaching Techniques

So What

1. Were the teaching techniques appropriate to the objective? If, for example, the objective was "to understand . . . ," were the techniques conductive to developing understanding?

2. Were the teaching techniques appropriate to the subject matter being studied?

    a. Was the subject matter discussable? Was it a question for analysis? Or was it a matter of established fact?
    b. Should what was being talked about have been demonstrated instead?
    c. Should what was being subjected to questioning have been merely read aloud expressively?

3. Were the teaching techniques appropriate to the particular class? For instance, did they subserve the subject matter? Or did they confuse these students about which was the end, which the means?

4. Was discussion really discussion? Or was each student merely reciting to the teacher or simply remarking about the topic?

5. Was the statement of each question clear and properly directive? That is, did it point out that in order to answer the question one must recall facts, or establish causal connections, or weigh alternatives--or carry out some equally specific action or actions?

6. Was the questioning developmental and skillfully manipulated?

7. Were tangents and irrelevancies in lines of discussion or in students' questions dismissed? How? By the class? By the teacher's restating the original question?

8. How soon did you realize that the tangents were tangential?

9. Were complex things made simple? How?

10. Were examples used pertinently? Did they really clarify?

    a. Or did the type they were or the way they were used cause them to compete for attention with the idea they were supposed to clarify?
    b. How many different areas of experience did the teacher draw examples from?

Now What

1. If you had been conducting this lesson:

    a. On what grounds would you have distinguished among the pertinent, the relevant, the tangential, and the irrelevant in student responses?
    b. How would you have incorporated the first two and maybe three, and how would you have dismissed the fourth?
    c. What example, analogy, or explanation would you have used to clarify some particular confusion you noted?

Observing and Analyzing the Subject Matter and the Materials of a Lesson

What

1. What segment of the subject matter was being studied? For example, if the subject matter was chemistry, was the segment "oxygen"? If history, was it "the Civil War"? If English, was it "Irving"?

So What

1. Is that segment of the subject matter the most appropriate that could be selected: The objective, the subject matter, and the class being what they are? On what are you basing your judgment?

2. From what viewpoint or with what focus was the particular segment of subject matter being studied? For example, if the segment was the Civil War, was the focus "the campaigns of the Civil War," or "the causes of the Civil War," or "the social consequences of internal war"?

3. Considering the objective, the subject matter, and the class, in what ways would you say that the viewpoint or the focus was suitable or unsuitable?

4. What exactly are the other segments of the subject matter or other viewpoints on it that would have been:

   a. more pertinent to the objective?
   b. more central to the subject matter?
   c. more significant for this class?

5. In what ways precisely is each suggestion you have made more pertinent, or more central, or more significant?

6. Are there any segments or any approaches that are eminently suitable to the objective and to the subject matter and to the class? On what precisely are you basing your judgment about this threefold appropriateness?

7. If the lesson seemed inappropriate, was it the subject matter or the viewpoint on it that was unsuitable or was it really the manner of presentation that was unfit? An example may clarify this important difference. Let us say that the subject matter was English grammar; the segment, adjectives; and the focus, modification. If the lesson seemed inappropriate, was it so because the adjective was an improper segment of subject matter to be studied? Or because modification was an unsuitable focus? Or rather:

   a. Was the manner of presentation subverting the objective? For example if the objective was "to teach students to use coordinating constructions for modifying ideas," was the teacher mistakenly concentrating on defining or analyzing adjective constructions?
   b. Did the teacher's manner of presentation show that he was unmindful that as a subject matter grammar is studied only as a means to and an explanation of expressive composition?
   c. Was the manner of presentation unsuitable for the class? Did the teacher, insensitive to the level of the class, dwell on the concept of adjectival modification in a most theoretical way?

8. Were the materials being used--the texts, maps, demonstrations, and such--truly suitable to the objective, to the segment of the subject matter studied, to the viewpoint taken, and to the class?

Observing and Analyzing the Design of the Lesson

What

1. What was the design or movement of the lesson? For example, was it diagonal (rising in a climactic order)? Or radial (diverging from a center or converging at one)? Or spiral?

2. Was there a tension between the students and the subject matter?

So What

1. Was the design of the lesson, in your opinion, an appropriate one? On what are you basing your judgment?

2. How specifically was tension between students and subject matter created?

3. If no tension was present, why not?

4. If an initial tension was created, how was it maintained?

5. If tension waned, was the decline caused by the teacher's:

   a. inability to gauge the attention span of the class?
   b. failure to insist on total involvement?
   c. incompetence in using productively the involvement achieved?
   d. insensitivity to the class' "signalling" that it was ready to move to a more complex level?
   e. inability to reshape the planned questions "in other words"?
   f. incapacity to bring a continual newness to a topic demanding concentrated study?

Now What

If you had been designing this lesson:

1. How would you have shaped it? Why?

2. How would you have delt with the problems of maintaining tension that the shape of your lesson would have introduced?

Observing and Analyzing the Close of a Lesson

What

1. How was the lesson drawn together at the close? By summary? By synthesis? By the natural evolution of a climax?

So What

1. Did the summary or the stated conclusion or the synthesis really represent the level of evaluation.

2. What relation did the assignment have to the lesson?

   a. Was it remedial; that is, designed to correct weaknesses revealed by the lesson?
   b. Was it intensifying; that is, designed to "fix" what was learned, through new work of a similar level of difficulty?
   c. Was it amplifying; that is, designed to give breadth and depth to what was learned, through new work on a more sophisticated level?

3. In view of where the class was at the conclusion of the lesson, did the assignment extend the lesson in an appropriate way? On what are you basing your judgment?

Now What

If you had been conducting the lesson:

1. How would you have closed it?

2. What specific assignment would you have considered most useful? Why?

Observing and Analyzing the Learning Environment

1. Describe the room in detail:

2. What materials are available in the room for the use of the class, such as maps, pictures, reference books, etc.?

3. List things in or about the room which might distract the pupils' attention from their work.

4. What do you like best about the appearance of the classroom?

5. What suggestions could you make for improving its appearance?

6. Select one pupil who seems to be somewhat of a disciplinary problem. How does this attitude affect others sitting near him or her? Would a change in the seating arrangement help this? If so, how? If not, why not?

7. Are any of the pupils too large or too small for their desks?
   Are there any left-handed pupils in the class?
   Ask the teacher if there are any pupils who are hard of hearing.
   Are there students with speech problems?
   Are any of the pupils abnormal in any other way?

   How will you, as a student teacher, adjust the learning environment to meet the needs of these people?

Observing and Analyzing Student Evaluation

1. Make a complete list of all the factors which will determine the semester grade of the pupils in your class.

2. Enumerate the principles your cooperating teacher keeps in mind when constructing examinations and written assignments.

3. What techniques does your cooperating teacher employ in evaluating tests and written assignments?

4. When does the teacher return graded test papers to the class? Why?

5. What does your cooperating teacher do when returning a set of papers so that individual pupils may get a maximum amount of instruction from them?

Shadowing a Student

Following a student through an entire school day is a simple and suprisingly revealing activity.

1. Arrange with your cooperating teacher for a student assignment.
2. Make sure the student involved is in agreement with what you are doing.
3. As unobtrusively as possible, follow the student throughout the entire day, including lunch.
4. Every ten minutes, jot down a brief answer to two questions: "What's going on in the room at this point in time?" "What is your student doing?" (See sample below)
5. At the end of the day, ask your student any questions you think will further your understanding of the student, his behavior, and the school.
6. Show the student your log if he or she is interested and let him/her tell you what was <u>really</u> going on.

Processing Questions

1. What most suprised you from the day's experience?

2. What conclusions can you draw about the interaction of your student and the school?

3. To what extent was your student involved with school life? Explain.

4. What implications for you as a teacher are suggested by the sum total of your experience?

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Sample log entry:

Time & Location	Behavior	Environment
9:40 a.m. Science Mr. M.	Bob sat quietly, listened and followed directions.	Teacher, Mr. M., also homeroom teacher, started by going over science vocabulary on board. Quick review. Pleasant. Joked with students.
	Passive participation. Bites lips, fingernails.	Text assignment, pages 336-73. (Read: "How Do Living Things Reproduce Without Seeds?" Room rich in students' work. Science current events charts, much NDEA equipment. Well-equipped. Went over new words before the reading began.

Investigating Pupil Health Services

Ask your cooperating teacher or principal for a copy of the physical examination blanks used by your school.

1. How often does your school have examinations of students by physicians, oculists, dentists, and nurses? How is this structured?

2. Are there private agencies in your community which assume some responsibility for examining or teaching health to pupils? If so, which ones and what do they do?

3. Does your school notify parents of physical defects discovered by school medical authorities? If so, how? If not, why not?

4. Describe briefly the program of your school for training pupils to conserve their health.

Investigating Extra-Curricular Activities

1. List the major extra-curricular activities offered at your school.

2. Are there academic standards that must be met to participate in such activities? If so, what? If not, why not?

3. Is there a regulation for limiting pupil participation in school clubs or interscholastic athletics?

4. Does your school give credit for extra-curricular activities? If so, how? If not, why not?

5. How are club advisors selected or appointed? Athletic coaches?

6. Give an example of an extra-curricular activity in which you participated as a secondary school student which influenced your later life.

7. What extra-curricular activities might you want to sponsor when you become a certified teacher? State specifically what preparation you have had that will qualify you for them.

Visit to a Teachers' Lounge

Arrange to visit the teacher's lounge in your school for a period of about two hours. Simply sit and listen. You may feel a little strange entering this inner sanctum. If you need to, introduce yourself - e.g., "I'm a student teacher with _____." Try not to be the center of attention.

Here are some ways to view the action:

1. How do teachers look? Act? Are there apparent sub-groups?

2. What is talked about?

3. Who is talked about?

4. What is really being said?

5. Can you imagine the discussions taking place if administrators were present? If parents were present? If students were present? Why or why not?

6. What teacher needs are being filled?

7. What kind of people do teachers seem to be?

8. What effect, if any, does your presence seem to have?

9. Did you find yourself agreeing with things you do not really believe? Explain.

Observing and Analyzing a Faculty Meeting

Attend a faculty meeting. Arrive five minutes ahead of time. Do not sit with other student teachers in the school.

1. Select four people randomly and jot down what each is doing at five-minute intervals throughout the meeting.

2. Identify your four teacher-people below:

Aware Emotional	Unaware Emotional
Aware Unemotional	Unaware Unemotional

3. Select one item on the agenda and process it in terms of levels 1,2, and 3.

4. Compare teacher behavior in faculty meetings to student behavior in class. How is it similar? How does it differ?

5. Which school goals seem most reflected in this faculty meeting? Which seem the least reflected?

6. Write your own processing question about:

   a. Your involvement in the experience

_____

_____

_____

Investigating School-Community Relations

1. What is done by your school to help promote a better school-community relationship?

2. Is there evidence that studies were made of community conditions prior to engaging in the activities mentioned above?

3. Is there any evidence that services were rendered to the school by the community? If so, what? If not, why not?

4. Is anything being done to develop joint responsibility on the part of the school and community for the educative process? If so, what? If not, why not?

5. What role, if any, does the parent organization play in school-community relations? Why?